

*Zeal for God's House, ex-  
press'd in a Resolution not  
to forsake it.*

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A  
S E R M O N

Preached at

*Little St. Hellens,*

MAY 28th, 1715.

Being the Birth Day of his present  
Majesty

KING GEORGE.

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By MATTHEW CLARKE. *R*

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L O N D O N :

Printed for JOHN MARSHAL, at the Bible in  
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To the Society that supports  
the Lord's-Day Morning  
Lecture at little St. *Hel-*  
*lens.*



FROM the time that I re-  
ceiv'd and comply'd with  
your Desire, to undertake  
this Service; which has been  
the Province of some others  
already, and I hope will be  
of many more: I resolv'd to accommodate  
my self as near as I could, to the general  
design of this Exercise.

I own, the Day you so happily made  
choice of for this Anniversary Meeting,  
might have led my Thoughts another way,  
but

but I chose rather to suit the Discourse to the Occasion, than to the Time, that the Society and the Sermon might agree in their Design. Tho' I do not know that there was in this manner, such a regard had to that Day in any other Places; yet I believe, there are none among us, but think this a just respect paid by you, to a Day remarkable for its giving Birth to a Prince, whom God by a wonderful Series of Providence, hath now advanc'd to the Throne of these Kingdoms, and in whose Accession to it, we did so universally and so heartily Rejoyce. Perhaps the Pleasure we always took in it, may be one Cause of those Insults that have been offer'd to our Persons and Places of Religious Worship, by some who pay that respect to the Dead, which they deny to the Living. Did we shew less satisfaction in this, I believe others would not have so much Indignation against us. This undeserv'd, and therefore provoking Treatment, I fear may cause too warm Resentments in the Breasts of Innocent Sufferers; To soften which I would recommend the Example of the meek and humble Jesus, who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, threatened not. And  
has

*has commanded us, That if our Enemies Curse, as their Mouths are full of Cursing, we should Bless, and Pray for them that despitefully use us; wherein we shall approve our selves (whatever we are called by others) the Children of our Father which is in Heaven. Then may we commit our Cause to him that judgeth Righteously, in confidence he will bring forth our Righteousness as Brightness, and our Salvation as a Lamp that burneth. Thus doing, We keep a Conscience void of Offence towards Man.*

*What is your Duty to God, I have endeavour'd to set before you in the following Discourse, which I now offer to your perusal, with some little Enlargement. The distance of Time between the Preaching and Publishing of it, may be thought by some to need an Apology: But I shall save my self and you that Trouble. To you I am willing to hope it will be acceptable; and shall rejoyce in nothing more, than its being bless'd for the encouraging your design, and provoking others to assist you in it.*

*If any shou'd hereby be inspir'd with a greater Zeal for God's House, and brought more heartily to approve his Worship; If from hence they come to be more fix'd in their Resolutions for God and his Service, I have my aim; and that it may be so, let what comes forth at your Request, be accompanied with your Prayers, as it shall be with those of,*

Your affectionate Friend,

and Servant,

June 24th,  
1715.

M. CLARKE

14 NO 63



Zeal



Zeal for God's House, express'd in a Holy Resolution not to forsake it.

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NEHEM. X. 39.

— *And we will not forsake the House of our God.*



**T**HIS Book carries on the Jewish History after the return of that People into their own Land, from a seventy Years Captivity in *Babylon*; and among other things, relates the several Grievances of which they justly complain'd, and the gross Corruptions by which a Righteous God was highly provoked; together with the Redress and Reformation of both: The latter of these is accounted for at large, in this and the foregoing Chapter, where we see how they were stir'd up to a sense of their Duty, by the Arguments and Example (as we may reasonably suppose) of *Nehe-*

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*miah*

## Zeal for God's House, express'd in

*miah*, their excellent Governour, of whom their own Historian gives this Character, \* *That he was a Man born to Justice and Virtue; and towards his Country and People most affectionate and beneficent.* Its very probable by the Influence and Authority of this great Man, (who in all things sought their Welfare) a Day of solemn Fasting and Prayer was appointed, to recognize the Mercies of God; to confess their own Sins, to humble themselves for what *had* been or *was* amiss, and resolve upon a thoro' Reformation for the time to come. Accordingly they enter into Covenant with God and one another; to the Performance of which, they bind themselves by the most sacred Ties and Engagements; for they agree to write it down that they might have recourse to it upon all occasions, and it might be a Witness against 'em if ever they should act contrary to it.

Having done this, *several* of 'em in the Name of the rest, set their Hands and Seals to it, and *all* of 'em confirmed it with an Oath and a Curse.

This Chapter is wholly employ'd in telling us the Names of the Persons that subscrib'd and seal'd this Covenant, together with the Tenour of it in general, and the particular Articles, to the Performance of which they oblig'd themselves.

The *Subscribers* of this Covenant and they that seal'd it, were *Nehemiah* the *Tirshatha*, with many others, whose Names are particularly mentioned, and make a noble Figure in this History: with these concurred the *rest* of the Peo-

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\* *Ἀνὴρ δὲ ἐγένετο χρεὶς δὲ τῆς φύσεως καὶ δίκαιος, καὶ περὶ τῆς ὁμοθυμίας φιλοπράτος.* Joseph. *Antiq. Jud.* Lib. 11. Cap. 5.

*a Holy Resolution not to forsake it.*

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ple; the Priests and Levites, Porters and Sing- V. 28.  
ers, and all that had seperated themselves from  
the People of the Land to the Law of their God.

The *Articles* of this Covenant shew that they  
laid no other Burthen upon themselves than  
those necessary things to which they were already  
obliged by all the Ties of Interest, Duty and  
Gratitude: That they would be zealous and  
active in their Endeavours to revive decay'd  
Religion, and reform all Abuses; that they would  
walk in God's Law, and do his Commandments:  
In a Word, they covenant against the Sins they  
had formerly liv'd in the Commission of, and  
oblige themselves to the Performance of those  
Duties they had heretofore too much neglected,  
concluding all with this pious Resolution, *And  
we will not forsake the House of our God.*

I shall briefly consider these Words as they re-  
late to the *Jews* at that time, and then shew how  
serviceable they may be to our present Design.

As they stand in this History, They are a de-  
vout and Holy Resolution never to forsake the  
House which was then built for the worship of  
God.

The House of God was once the Tabernacle Josh. 18. 1.  
at *Shiloh*, where the Ark continued about Three  
hundred and twenty five Years. This House God  
at length *forsook, even the Tent which he placed among* Psal. 78.  
*Men, delivering his Strength into Captivity, and his* 60, 61.  
*Glory into the Enemies Hands.*

After this, the House of God was the *Temple*  
at *Jerusalem*; To this House, God confin'd a great  
part of his Worship; here he promised to meet  
and bless his People, to manifest his Glory, and  
make his Abode. This House they had seen in  
Ruins, being burnt down to the Ground by the

2 Chron.  
36, 19.

King of the Chaldees. Then the Ways of Zion mourn'd; for none came to the solemn Feasts; her Adversaries saw it, and mock'd at her Sabbaths; yea the Lord covered the Daughter of Zion with a Cloud in his Anger; and cast down from Heaven to the Earth the beauty of Israel, and remembred not his Footstool in the day of his Anger. For he was sorely displeas'd with his People, and had Indignation against Jerusalem Threescore and ten Years; But he was now become jealous for Zion with a great Jealousy, and was return'd to Jerusalem with Mercy, and gather'd those that had been sorrowful for the solemn assembly, to whom the reproach of it had been a burden.

The poor Captives being return'd to Jerusalem with license to build God's House, and a full liberty to attend his worship, they now resolve never to forsake it. The Sense of which Resolution may be given in this short Paraphrase. 'We do here solemnly covenant with God and one another, That we will never be guilty of Idolatry, as we and our Fathers have been; That we will no more forsake the Temple, for any high places that had been built and frequented heretofore; So far from this, we will not fail as we have Opportunity to frequent this place but constantly attend upon the worship of God in it; and not only so, but we further oblige our selves to provide all things necessary for the Service and Worship to be perform'd therein. Such a Zeal then inspired their Souls for the House of God.

Having taken this View of the Words as they relate to the Jews, I shall now consider them as instructive to us, and shew, 137. That it's a Resolution well becoming Christians themselves,

not

*a Holy Resolution not to forsake it.*

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not to forsake the House of their God. 2dly, That it's not only lawful, but may be useful, and of great advantage in distinct Societies to oblige and engage our selves hereunto. And then, 3dly, Offer Reasons both for *making* this Resolution, and then *obliging* our selves to make it good. From this Instance before us we may gather.

First, *That it's a Resolution worthy of and well becoming Christians themselves, not to forsake the House of their God.* The same zeal and affection which this People express'd to the Temple, shou'd be manifested by us to the Church and Ordinances of Christ: *That House* was the material Temple at *Jerusalem*, the Centre of their Unity; the place whither the Tribes were to resort, and where all their Males of Competent Years were bound at certain Times and Seasons to appear.

Under the Gospel there is no such House unto which all are obliged to *repair*; and any parts of divine Worship are *confined*. But there is frequent mention of *that* in the new Testament under the Metaphor of an House (with allusion no doubt unto the Temple) which it should be our Resolution also never to forsake. This is not a *material* building, as the Temple was, made by Mens Hands, of Wood and Stones, of Silver and Gold, and Cedar work; but a *mistical* Building, a *Spiritual* House, whose *Maker* is the living God, and whose *Materials* are living Stones: *whose House are We: q. d.* I have been speaking of a House, in which Christ was faithful as a Son; and will now strip the Words of their Metaphor, and tell you in plainer Terms, by this House I mean the Church of God, as it's composed of the Faithful in all Ages and Places of the World;

Heb. 3. 6.

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comprehending his Worship and Ordinances, with all the Concerns of his Kingdom, and Interest among Men. This is that House which we shou'd resolve never to forsake. There is doubtless much more intended than is expressed in such Forms of Speech, and in its full extent, this Resolution comprehends the three following particulars.

1<sup>st</sup>, *That we will never cast off the Profession of our Faith, nor make a Defection from the Truths and Ways of the Gospel for any Cause and upon any Account whatsoever*: Its so rare a thing for a Nation to change their Gods (tho' really no Gods) that the Jer. 2. 11. Prophet challenges his People to produce a single Instance of its being ever done, *Hath a Nation changed their Gods?* Tell, if you can, *when and where* it was once done! Where is the Nation among the Heathens that ever did it? They have too great a Veneration for their Gods, too high an Opinion of 'em ever to change 'em: But to the everlasting Reproach of *Israel*, *They had chang'd their Glory for that which did not profit*. They that were the only People under Heaven who had no Cause to change their God, were of all others the People that had done it.

Now it's this Defection from the true God and his Worship, which this People covenanted against in the Resolution of the Text. And agreeably to this, we also should resolve against all Defection from the true God; that we will not forsake him nor deal falsely in his Covenant; that we will never apostatise from the Commands and Institutions of the blessed Jesus, but cleave to the Lord with full purpose of Heart, &c. This we must do if we will approve our selves indeed the House of God; For his House, Heb. 3. 6. says the Apostle, *are we, if we hold fast the Confidence*

*a Holy Resolution not to forsake it.*

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*fidence and rejoycing of Hope firm to the End*; if we do not only make an open Profession of the Truth for a time, but are stedfast and unmoveable in it to the end, it then appears that we are indeed living Stones in God's Spiritual Temple.

2dly, *That we will not neglect the Ordinances of Divine Worship, nor be wanting in our Attendance on them, whenever we are called and have the Opportunity of appearing before God in his House.* Thus much is contained in this Resolution of these devout and reforming Jews; they would be so far from making a defection from the true God, that they oblige themselves to frequent his Temple, and resolve they will not, thro' Sloth or Covetousness, much less thro' Prophaness and Contempt of Sacred Institutions, disuse the House and Worship of God, but constantly appear in the Temple at the stated times of Worship.

And the same should be our Resolution with respect to the House and Worship of God under the Gospel; we certainly are under no less Obligations to frequent Christian Assemblies and keep up publick Worship than they were; we stand in as much need of these Helps and Advantages as they did. Concerning this, let the following Particulars be observed;

1st, *Jesus Christ as Lord of his own House, has appointed divers Ordinances to be observ'd in his Church; viz. Prayer and Praise to be offer'd up to God; the Word to be preach'd, and Sacraments to be administred. None has power to add unto, or take from these: Its a bold invasion of his just Right and Prerogative to pretend to either.*

2dly, *There must be an assembly of People meeting together for the publick administration of these*  
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*holy Ordinances.* The certain and determinate Number is no where prescrib'd, but so many there must be, as will make it publick Worship.

3dly, *There must be some proper and convenient Places appointed and agreed upon for such Religious Assemblies, where they can be had.* Places where Prayer, (with other parts of Religious Worship) is wont to be made. I shall not interrupt the thread of this Discourse, nor raise a dust in our Passage by disputing, what are the places where these Ordinances are duely *administred* and ought to be *attended*. Some are for worshipping in *these places*, and others say, *this is the place* where Men ought to worship; and no Worship will be acceptable in any other. Some have learned to condemn all Assemblies but their own, and every way of Worship but what agrees with their's. Here I shall not interpose, but leave it to every Mans Conscience, where (according to the best light he can get) he thinks himself oblig'd ordinarily to worship God; what the places are where God is serv'd in a way most agreeable to the Rules of his Word, where he may expect most of God's presence, and has found, or may hope to find, the greatest Advantage to himself. To proceed,

4thly, *There are particular times and seasons for the holding these Religious Assemblies.* Reason tells us, if God is to be worshipped, there must be a set *time* for it. These Seasons are either *stated* and *fix'd* on the day appropriated to the worship of God, or *occasional* on some of our own six days. Which day of the Week is design'd, and ought to be observ'd for this stated Worship, is not agreed among all those  
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that yet are heartily affected to the worship of God it self. Some do zealously, and with great warmth contend, that this is the *seventh* Day of the Week; we think since our Saviour's Resurrection, the *first* day of the Week to be the Christian Sabbath; the commemoration of the Work of *Redemption*, having taken place of that of *Creation*; but neither shall I here enter upon this Controversy, but proceed to observe.

5thly. *There are certain Persons, whose Work and Duty it is, to go before others in these holy Administrations.* Such as do not take this honour to themselves, but are *really* called of God. Who they are that have this Authority I list not now to contend. Some do determine it entirely in their own Favour, and have the Charity as well as Modesty to null all Administrations besides their own; but it's a small matter with us to be judged of Mans Judgment: He that judges us, that has a *right* to do it, and will do it *righteously* is the Lord, to whose Judgment we stand or fall.

To return then; *This* Worship, *these* Ordinances, and Assemblies we should resolve never to forsake, but as we have Opportunity, constantly attend upon and thereby express our Duty to God, our Zeal for his House, and our Delight in his Service.

3dly. *That we will promote as far as in us lies the Interests of Religion, and spread the Kingdom of Christ in the World.* It argues a *meaness* of Soul, to say nothing worse of it, to be seeking every Man his own things, his own Ease and Pleasure, his own Advantage and Reputation in the World: and it's a *narrowness* of Soul, no ways conformable to Christ's Example, or the Spirit of the Gospel,

Pfal. 122.  
9.

to confine that Concern we have for others, within the scanty Limits of a particular Party of Men: this is like seeking the Good only of one Street in a City, or one Town in a Nation. It was *David's* generous Resolution, because of the House of God which was there, to seek the Good of all *Jerusalem*. *Because of the House of the Lord our God, I will seek thy Good, O Jerusalem,* the Good of the whole City, not one particular Street only; and, like him, we ought to be of publick Spirits, and seek a general Good. Tho' Christians next us, and more immediately under our Care and within our reach, may be the Objects of our more apply'd Endeavours and Concern, yet it's not the Good of this or that particular Church and Society only, but the whole Interest of Christ as opposed to the Devils Kingdom in the World; whose Welfare and Prosperity we are bound to seek.

We should carry on *generous* Designs for God, study how we may most effectually promote his Interest in the World, and desire to spread the favour of Christ's Knowledge the most diffusely amongst Men; Not only resolve to attend the Worship of God *our* selves, but give *others* an opportunity of doing so too; and this by promoting the preaching of the everlasting Gospel, that glorious Chariot in which the Redeemer is carried thro' the World, and by which Salvation is brought to Mens Doors. Having seen what is contained in this Resolution; I proceed to observe from hence,

Secondly, That it's not only *lawful*, but may be *useful* and *expedient* for Christians in *Societies* to *engage themselves to God, and the Duties they owe to him and one another*. This People agreed together as one

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Man, and bound themselves by a solemn Covenant which was written, and subscribed, seal'd and sworn to, *That they wou'd never forsake the House of the Lord their God*, but constantly attend upon the publick Worship, and do every thing that was necessary for its support. Whether a *National* Covenant for such Purposes among Christians, may be supported by this Instance, is a Question I have no inclination to meddle with; nor will I pretend to determine how far this may warrant an *explicite* Covenant in particular Churches; having no call on this occasion to enter into any such Controversy. Nor do I suppose the Parallel is to be run so far, as to make it necessary from hence, for all Christians to enter themselves into expresse Covenants that must be wrote down, signed, sealed, &c. and I am sure much less am I encouraging any Confederacies with political Views that may be dangerous to States and Governments, and give any Umbrage to Rulers and Civil Magistrates. Our Religion neither *teaches* nor *allows* any such thing. What I would gather from this Instance is, That as *this* People did, *Christians* may voluntarily agree together, and engage themselves in particular Societies to carry on a work for God in such a way as is warranted by his Word, and judg'd by themselves most likely to promote some valuable End; Suppose that of Re-forming Mens Lives, Or that of instructing Children and Youth, Or to encourage the preaching of the Gospel, and an Attendance on the Worship of God, which last is the Design of *this* Society as the two former are of some others.

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The *lawfulness* of this, I think, cannot be question'd, when we consider,

The way in which our *personal* Consent to God's Covenant is express'd. Its prophesied by *Isaiah*, That in Gospel-Times, Converts in great Numbers should resign themselves to the Lord, incorporate with one another; and this in so solemn a manner, that it should be as if they subscribed an agreement with their Hand.

*Isa. 44. 5. One shall say I am the Lords, another shall call himself by the Name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his Hand to the Lord.*

This further appears from the Nature of God's Institutions. *Our Baptism* is a Sacramental Oath, or Vow to walk before God in all holy Obedience, to be faithful to his Service and never forsake it. This Engagement is renew'd in the *Lord's Supper*, wherein we publicly engage to stand to our Covenant. Now if God thought such a Course necessary for us, why may we not upon occasion, use some of the like Methods to confirm and strengthen us in the Work of Obedience?

Moreover, if the practice of the Saints and People of God under the old Testament, be any direction to us in this Case, it is abundantly warranted from thence; for we have divers instances of that nature, all recorded for our Instruction; as, *2 Chron. 15. 12, 13. 2 Chron. 34. 31.*

The *Expediency* and *Advantage* of this is the next thing to be made out; but this may be very properly thrown into the following head. To which I proceed; *viz.*

Thirdly, To offer Reasons both for *making* this Resolution, and *obliging* our selves to make it good.

*1st.* Why should we resolve not to forsake the House

House of our God, but do what we can for the support of his Interest and Worship; for so much as has been observ'd, is included in this Resolution.

Reason I. Because it is *God's* House. Every thing that's *His* shou'd be sacred and dear to us. Now its *His* House we are to frequent, they are *His* Ordinances on which we attend; Its *His* Word that's preach'd and heard; and *His* Interest we oblige our selves to support. They Carry his Image and Supercription; this gives 'em their worth and value, and is a sufficient Reason why we shou'd not forsake 'em. Its the House of the Eternal God, the Author of our beings and blessedness; whose we are, and whom we are bound to serve; *from* whom we have received, and *for* whom we shou'd employ all our Powers and Capacities; its the service of one we shall never have any cause to complain of; whose commands put no *hardships*, and whose promises we are sure will put no *fallacies* upon us. Sure the House, the Interest and Service of such a God, how much soever despis'd and neglected by others, shou'd be dear to us, and deserves our Attendance.

This is the greatest Good upon Earth; for the Honour of the everblessed God, the Effects of Christ's Blood, and the Concerns of his Kingdom, are all embark'd in this bottom; and what is so dear to God, shou'd always lye near the Hearts of his People.

This general Reason involves many particulars in it. Since its God's House, we shou'd resolve not to forsake it. Because,

*First*, This would be to forsake our own Mercies, and deprive our selves of the most valuable  
Blessing

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Blessing in the whole World. Should we desert the Service of God, and turn aside to lying Vanities, we should act as contrary to our Interest as our Duty. This would be to stand in our own Light, and turn our Back upon our own Happiness. For in God's House,

We are sure to meet with the truest pleasure and satisfaction : Its promis'd to those that joyn themselves to the Lord, and serve him ; that he will bring them into his holy Mountain, and *make them joyful in his House of Prayer*. They that came sorrowing to *God's House*, shall be sent away rejoicing to their *own* ; and according to God's Promise is the Churches Experience. *I sat down under his Shadow with great delight, and his Fruit was sweet to my tast.* David upon this Account professes to all the World, *That a Day in God's Court is better to him than a thousand elsewhere* ; and therefore all his Wilhes were summed up in this one, *That he might dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of his Life, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his Holy Temple*. Such a Pleasure had he in attending on Publick Worship. So that to forsake the House of God, wou'd be to deprive our selves of that, which to a renewed Mind is the most agreeable Entertainment in the World. Again,

In this House we may expect to find the greatest Benefit and Advantage : It's here we may promise our selves spiritual Light, Life, Strength, Peace, Comfort and Soul-Refreshment. It's in this House we may hope to have our Doubts resolv'd, our Darknes scatter'd, and Temptations most effectually vanquish'd. The Ordinances of God's House are intended for our establishment and growth in Grace ; to improve us in

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Faith, Love and Holiness; to work us into a greater conformity to Gods Image, and give us a further meetness for his Kingdom. So that if we desert this House, we forsake our own Mercies, and are our own greatest Enemies; by this Course its certain we hinder our spiritual Profit and Advantage, lose many useful Instructions in Matters of Religion; and deprive our selves of those Exhortations that are needful to quicken us in the way of our Duty, to establish us in Grace, and prepare us for Glory. Once more,

In this House we may expect to meet with that which will prove the firmest and most effectual support to us, under all the troubles of Life, and at the near approach of Death. In our secret retirements, we may hope to have communion with God; but its in the Sanctuary, in the solemn Assembly, we may expect the clearest manifestations of Him, the brightest views of his Glory, the sweetest tastes of his Love, and the most sensible experience of his Power; all which are design'd for our comfort and support, whilst we are passing thro' the World, and when we are parting with it. So that to forsake this House, is to cut our selves off from our chief and only support in times of danger and distress.

*Secondly*, To leave this House, is to forsake the Place which God himself hath chosen, and where he delights to dwell. *The Lord loves the Gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob.* Psal. 87. 2. Concerning Zion, the Gospel Church its said, *God hath chosen it, he hath desir'd it for his Habitation:* Psal. 132. 13. 14. *This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell for I have desir'd it.* So that for us to desert this House, is to forsake a place where God himself delights to be,

be, where he has promis'd to vouchsafe his Presence, and command his Blessing. Than which nothing can be more foolish, as well as impious; for is it not good for us to be near to God? has He said here *will I dwell*, and shou'd not we for that reason say, here will we dwell? We will never forsake that House which God himself has desir'd for his Habitation; that which he hath said shall be his Rest for ever, shall be our dwelling all the Days of our Lives.

*Thirdly*, To forsake this House, is to forsake God himself: We cannot quit the Inheritance of the Lord, but in effect we go and serve other Gods: If we desert his House, decline his Worship and Ordinances, he interprets it a forsaking of himself, which is a Sin that exposes us to the reproach of the Heathens themselves; as being more firm to their false Gods, then we are to the true one. But above all, this is what exposes us to the severest resentments of an offended God, and must certainly be attended with Consequences fatal to our selves. Should we forsake the House of God, and desert the Assemblies of his People; whither and to whom shall we go? To what Houses will they resort, that have once forsaken God's House? With what Company will they associate, and in what Assemblies may we expect to find those that have renounc'd the Communion of Saints? When they fall off from Christ, who can they fall *in with* but Sinners? Satan's Agents and Emissaries gather them up, and make an easy Prey of them. The Devil stands ready to sieze them for his own, when ever they wander from Christ's Fold. If

*Joh. 15. 6.* *a Man abide not in me, says our Saviour, he is cast forth as a Branch and is wither'd, and Men*

*gather*

gather them and cast them into the Fire, and they are burned. He is deprived of the special Favour and Protection of God; thrown out of the Hearts, the Prayers and Society of his People, withers away and comes to nothing in the End: his early Goodness is but as an early Dew that soon passes away; and being left to himself, he is drawn into the Communion of Sinners, has his Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, and grows worse and worse till he runs into open Impieties and a scandalous Conversation. This comes of forsaking God's House! This is the End of all Apostates! Whoever draws back does it at the price of his Soul: his final Apostacy will be to his eternal Perdition; God has declar'd in the most awful manner, that such Men above all others are the abhorrence of his Soul, and as this Sin is so highly provoking to him, it will be sure to meet with a Punishment proportionable to its Guilt.

Heb. 10.

Reason II. *Because our own particular Good is lodg'd in the publick Interest.* In seeking this we seek our selves. At the same time that we discharge our Duty, we consult our Interest. All our Comfort and Happiness flows from the House of God; and therefore for our own sakes, we ought to seek its Welfare. *Behold, thus shall the Man be bless'd that feareth the Lord; the Lord shall bless thee out of Zion.* Thy pious Concern for his Glory, shall be rewarded with Blessings that come out of Zion: which are always the best Blessings, because such as flow from special Favour, and are not the Effects of a common Providence. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem. Bear it up on your Hearts, whenever you are upon your Knees: Sooner let your Tongue cleave to the Roof of

Psal. 128.  
4, 5.

Pf. 122. 6.

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your Mouth, and your Right-hand forget her Art, than you should not remember *Jerusalem*; if you can do nothing else yet pray for her; Pray for her Peace and Purity, her Preservation and Prosperity; and for our Encouragement it's promis'd, *They shall prosper that love her*, and in this manner express their Affection to that dear place. A Prayer, tho' but a Prayer sent to Heaven on *Jerusalem's* Errand, shall come back like *Noah's Dove*, with an Olive-Branch of Peace in its Mouth. No Service perform'd to Christ, shall lose its Reward. No Man shall kindle a Fire on God's Altar, or shut a Door in his House for naught. We shall certainly find our own Advantage, in a conscientious Concern for the Publick Good. Its then likely to go well with our own Houses, when due care is taken that it may go well with God's House. *Those that honour Him, he will honour, but they that despise him shall be lightly esteem'd.* The Memory of those generous Souls that fought a publick Good shall be bless'd, and their Names had in everlasting Remembrance: When the Names of those low spirited Creatures that lived for nothing but themselves, shall be utterly forgotten, or mention'd only with contempt and disgrace.

1 Sam. 2.  
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Reason III. *This is the noblest way of imitating the great God himself, and conforming to the Example of his Son our blessed Saviour.*

Its one of the brightest Characters of the Divine Being, that he is good and doth good; *Thou art good O Lord and thou doest good.* To be like God is our truest Glory, and shou'd be our highest Ambition; now wherein are we more like

Psal. 119.  
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Like him, than in answering this Character; in being good our selves, and doing good to others? It was *Abraham's* glory to be blessed himself, and made a blessing to the World. I will bless thee, and thou shalt *be a blessing*. There Gen. 12.2. is nothing in which we come nearer to God, than this of being a diffusive Good; useful to the World, and publick Blessings to Mankind.

Herein also we imitate the shining Example of our blessed Saviour, of whom it's written, *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up*. His Anger at the prophanation of the Temple, rose up to an holy Indignation. His languor of Soul, and warm concern for God's Honour, exhausted his Spirits, and dried up his natural Moisture. This swallow'd up all his private Regards; he forgets himself, and seems to neglect his own safety, that he might secure his Fathers Honour: And by our Zeal for God's House, we shew the same mind to be in us, that was in him. Psal. 69.9.

A Soul that's not confin'd to himself, nor his own private Interests; but looks out, and thinks what he may do for God; that has no narrow contracted views, but enlarged Desires, and unbounded Schemes for publick Service, is indeed a God-like Soul: For the supreme good is most diffusive of it self; and the more spreading our usefulness is, the more we look like God.

*Moses* valued not his own Family, compar'd with God's *Israel*, and therefore refus'd to have that rais'd to a Nation, upon the condition of their being no longer a People. *Nehemiah* was himself in an honourable Post, but greatly afflicted at *Jerusalem's* low Estate, and ventures the

*Zeal for God's House, express'd in*

loss of his Princes Favour, to serve the Interests of his dear People. And *Hester* generously resolv'd to solicit for the lives of others, tho' it were at the hazard of her own.

Reason IV. *This makes Men real Blessings to the World.* However they may be esteem'd by others, they really are the strength and security of a Nation; the stay and support of the publick Interest: They bear up the Pillars of the Earth, and keep it from being quite dissolv'd. It's for their sakes, God sometimes preserves others from those Judgments which their crying Sins wou'd otherwise pull down upon their guilty Heads. *Sodom* had been preserv'd for the sake of ten Righteous Persons, could so many have been found in the place.

A Number of serious Persons, that are themselves truly Religious, and have the Interests of Religion at Heart, that are fill'd with Zeal for God and his House, and are a praying Generation; That can and do wrestle with God for his People, that give him no rest Day nor Night, till he establish *Jerusalem*: These are really the support of a State, and save things from running to decay and ruin. Others call them the Troublers of the Land, and like *Haman* can't enjoy themselves, unless they are rooted out of the Earth; but they are really the *Chariots of Israel, and Horsemen thereof. The Holy Seed is the Substance thereof, and the Innocent delivers the Island.* Good Men are a publick good, and others fare the better for them, whether they are aware of it, and

Isa. 65. 8. will acknowledg it or no. *As new Wine is in the Cluster, and one saith destroy it not, a Blessing is in it: So will I do for my Servants sake, that I may not destroy them all; he spares the rest for the sake* of

of his Servants, the Righteous ones among them. Many of these may have no opportunity of serving their Country in a publick Capacity; Their Circumstances are too narrow to admit it; or they are unskilful in Affairs of this Nature, and destitute of that worldly Wisdom and Policy which is necessary for Persons intrusted with the management of publick Affairs: Or they may be laid under an incapacity by the Laws of the Land, and singled out from the rest of their Fellow-Subjects as not fit to be trusted by those in Power; but still in a private Capacity, and especially when joyn'd with others, they may carry on noble and useful designs for God, and may be of great Service to their Country. And it is usually a sign of Mercy to a People, when God opens and enlarges the Hearts of others, and stirs up any Number of Persons to form Societies for spreading useful Knowledge, and to promote Reformation and serious Godliness.

Reason V. *This will be our Rejoycing and Comfort another Day.* We shall never have cause to repent of any Service we do for Christ and his Interest in the World. It will be no grief of Heart to us hereafter, to have employ'd those Powers and Capacities in the Service of Religion, which others have lavish'd away upon things perishing in *themselves*, and destructive to their owners. *Nehemiah* reflected with a great deal of Comfort and Satisfaction, upon what he had done for the House of his God: It pleas'd him to think he had been any way instrumental to revive and support Religion in his Countrey, and he humbly appeals to God concerning the honesty of his intention in all he had done: *Remember me O my God for this!*

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## Zeal for God's House, express'd in

How uneasy must the Reflections of an awaken'd Conscience be hereafter, in those that all their Days have done nothing for God? that sought only Themselves, their own Ease, Pleasure and Advantage; Spent all their Time, and Care, and Thoughts for the advancement of their own Interest; that loved none, and lived to none but themselves: And on the other hand, with what Comfort may we reflect upon a Life laid out for God, and Talents employ'd in his Service? How comfortable then to have the Testimony of our Consciences, and to be able to say, 'I have not been like an empty Vine, nor lived 'an unprofitable Burthen on the Earth; God's 'Service hath been my Work, and his Glory my 'End, I have finish'd my Course and sery'd my 'Generation; whatever came upon me, yet I 'have not *forgotten God, nor dealt falsely in his Co- 'venant.* This will cause the Face to shine, and the Heart to rejoyce.

Only when we have done all this, we must acknowledge we are but unprofitable Servants, and shall see need to pray as *Nehemiah* did, *Remember me O my God, for this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy Mercy.* It is not for us to speak of our good Deeds in a way of Pride and Boasting; much less are we to depend upon them as our Righteousness before God, as if what we had done, merited a Reward at his hands; for our best Actions need sparing Mercy.

*Secondly*, I come to offer Reasons for obliging our selves to this Duty, and agreeing together, to encourage and attend the worship of God.

**Reason I.** Such Engagements are necessary *because of the deceitfulness and inconstancy of our Hearts.* The Holy Ghost tells us, and our own Experi-

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Experience sadly witnesses to the Truth of it, *That the Heart of Man is deceitful above all things, &c.* There is that Wickedness in our Hearts, which we do not suspect, and are not aware of. And this never appears so much as in an Hour of Temptation; then their Deceitfulness shews it self, and their corrupt Dispositions break forth. We are then turn'd aside like a deceitful Bow, which promis'd fair, and seem'd likely to send the Arrow to the Mark, but when drawn, breaks, and drops it at the Archers Foot. There's no depending on their Promises and Professions: This being the Case, sure no Man that's honest will startle at Engagements, nor will he that considers this fickleness and instability of his own Heart, think them needless. A sincere Soultreckons he never can be bound fast enough, and therefore desires to put himself under the strictest Ties and the most sacred Engagements to God; yea, and finds all little enough, indeed, too little without the special Aid of Divine Grace to keep him stedfast.

Reason II. *Such Engagements will help to fix us more firmly in the Interests of Religion, and make us more successful in resisting all Temptations to Apostacy.* There are those Difficulties and Discouragements arising in the course of our Obedience, which tend not only to hinder our Progress in it, but wholly to divert us from it, and prevail upon us to turn back, and walk no more therein. A thousand things start up and tell us, there's a Lion in the way, if you go forward you will be slain; therefore never think of making any further Progress, it will but *expose you to danger, you run the hazard of your Reputation, your Interest, and it may be your very Lives.* Spare your  
*selves,*

*selves*, and retreat while you may : Now that we may be the better fortified against these Suggestions, and put by the force of such Assaults, it will be very proper to bind our selves to the Lord and one another ; Then shall we have to answer him that would thus seduce us from our Duty, ' I have lift up my Hand to the most high God, and cannot go back ; we are under ' Covenant Engagements to the Lord ; we have ' sworn that we will keep God's Judgments, ' and will never go contrary to the Oath we ' have taken, but must and will perform it. I ' cannot go back without contracting the utmost ' guilt upon my own Soul, and shall certainly incur the highest Displeasure of that God who ' will revenge the Quarrel of his Covenant ; for ' he that deserts a Service is sure to meet with ' a Punishment which he escapes that was never list'd into it. How then can I do this ' Wickedness and Sin against the most sacred ' Vows and Engagements ? I cannot, I will not ' do it, *Get thee behind me Satan.*

Reason III. *Because hereby we are rendred more capable of serving the Interests of Religion.* A Force when united becomes the stronger. They that are ready to call themselves dry Trees, from whom little or no Fruit can be expected ; that complain they are but Cyphers in the World, and make no Figure among their Neighbours ; all that they can do is very inconsiderable, and stands for next to nothing. These indeed taken alone, and consider'd in a single Capacity can do very little ; yet when joyn'd with others, and form'd into regular Societies, may be of singular Service in promoting the Interest of Religion, and united into one collective

collective Body, may carry on some excellent and very useful designs in the World. The joynt Concurrence of many, gives a great advantage to such a design, and a better Prospect of Success. To conclude this Argument,

We may learn such a Practice from other Societies, formed to promote very different Ends: Some for the Encouragement of *Trade*, which no Body looks upon with an evil Eye, and if prudently manag'd, may answer some good purposes: There are others, for propagating the Gospel *abroad*; and why may there not be some also for promoting Religion at *home*?

Wicked Men very frequently act in Bands and Troops for the Service of their Head and Prince: We read of some that boasted they had made a Covenant with Death, and were at an Agreement with Hell. It has been said (for my own part I know nothing of it but by report) that young Men in several Parts of this City, have form'd themselves into little Cabals, for the strengthening one anothers Hands in Wickedness; and shall none of the same Age form themselves into Societies for promoting Religion? Others, we are told have their private Clubs and Meetings, on purpose to propagate Notions that undermine Religion, and are subversive of Christianity; and shall it be a Crime to have Meetings whose design it is to support and defend the Truths of the Gospel? We know that a certain number of *Jews* more than forty, banded together, and bound themselves under a Curse, neither to Eat nor Drink till they had killed *Paul*; an innocent Person, that never did them any harm. And in our own time, had we not a Conspiracy form'd by some of the worst of

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Men, against the Life of one of the best of Kings? Pretty near such a Number, and much such a set of Men, (perfectly lost to all sense of Humanity and Honour,) banded together, (as they did) in a league, to Murther the late King *William*, in the barbarous and cowardly way of Assassination. But the wakeful Providence of God, discover'd their *black* design, and preserv'd that *precious* Life, to procure for us, that, for which some will never forgive him, and we ought never to forget him; but bless his Memory, which they for this very reason, so like themselves, curse upon all occasions. You will easily understand I mean by this, the Protestant Succession in the House of our present Sovereign King *George*, whose Birth-Day you have made choice of for this Annual Meeting, and we observe with a peculiar pleasure.

These made a Vow the Bond of their Iniquity, and is it not lawful in some Cases to learn of an Enemy? Shall not their Zeal for the Devil's Interest, provoke ours for God's House? Shall there be Societies for perpetrating the most horrid Villanies, and to encourage the worst of Evils; and shall not Religious Persons act in concert for God, and form designs for the Redeemers Service, and the Salvation of those Souls that are the price of his Blood?

I have now done with the Words themselves, and shall in a few things apply my self to you of this Society, whose Names are subscribed to this Religious, and I hope useful Undertaking. Yours is the only Society (that I know) of this kind among us; You have voluntarily engag'd to attend the publick Worship early on the Lords-Day Mornings your selves, and to give others

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an Opportunity of doing so too ; that the Sabbath might be sanctify'd in the beginning of it by a Morning Lecture, as well as towards its close by Evening Lectures.

I perswade my self this proceeds from a true well guided Zeal for God ; that this put you upon beginning, and still excites you to continue this Morning Exercise. May you see some good Fruit of such designs for God and Souls, to your abundant Comfort and Joy.

For which end allow me to be your Remembrancer in a few things.

First, *See that your Aims and Views herein are sincere.* Be careful not to interweave any carnal Counsels and selfish Projects of your own into this design. Do nothing herein for the applause of Men, and to be taken notice of by others, or merely to serve a Party. Banish these things at the utmost distance from your Society. Let your Consciences bear you witness that your aims are purely at God's Glory, and a publick Good. That the Society is calculated for the advancement of Religion in general, and not to serve the Interests of any one particular party of Men.

Secondly, *Be your selves Religious :* Really and Exemplarily so. Do nothing I beseech you unworthy your Society ; give others no occasion to reproach you with the want of Religion your selves, who set up for the promoting of it in others: But be *Examples* of that Religion you are desirous to encourage. Manage all with such Prudence, that your own private Affairs may in nothing suffer hereby ; nor your Zeal for this publick Exercise be reproach'd with a neglect of Family Duties. In a Word, let no Root of Bitterness spring up to trouble and defile you,

and tempt others to think and speak ill both of you and your design.

Thirdly, Be *true to your Engagements*: make good this Resolution not to forsake the House of the Lord your God. I do not mean by this, that you are so tied up to any particular Society, that you may not be at liberty to withdraw where there's a justifiable Occasion; Circumstances may vary, and render it inconvenient and improper for us to continue therein any longer. But our Covenant Engagements with God, can never be dispens'd with, having bound our selves to the Lord we must never go back. As to this, it should be our fix'd resolution, that we will never forsake the House of our God.

And as to any particular design we are engag'd in, for the service of Religion, we should not easily and slightly drop it. Resolve not to do this,

*Thro' Sloth and Idleness.* This loses some the former part, especially of the Lord's-Days Worship; they cannot break thro' some inconveniences from the Way or Weather, nor prevail with themselves to leave their Beds soon enough, to attend the Morning Worship. They cry out, yet *a little Sleep, a little Slumber and folding the Hands to Sleep.* But let us resolve to shake off this Sloth, and not prefer our own Ease and Pleasure to the Worship of God. Nor

*Thro' fear of Trouble, and to avoid the Tryals we may be expos'd to, for our firm adherence to Christ and his Ways.* It was the Psalmist's complaint; *For thy sake I have born Reproach, Shame hath cover'd my Face, for the Zeal of thy House hath eaten me up. My Friends are apt to censure and condemn me, I am become a Stranger*

Psal. 69. 7,  
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to my Brethren, and an Alien to my Mothers Children. They think me more zealous and forward then I need to be, and instead of commending my Devotion, and recommending of it as an Example of Piety to others, they weaken my Hands, and endeavour to discourage me in it. As for my *Enemies* they are sure to reproach me, they hate me, and for my Zeal to thy House are ready to eat me up, and wou'd devour me. But it should be our fix'd resolution not to forsake the House of our God, notwithstanding all the discouragements we meet with, either from Friends or Enemies; tho' some should be ready to censure and condemn us, tho' others revile and speak contemptibly of us, and our way of Worship, and we should be expos'd to the scorn of Fools, yea, not only laugh'd at, but persecuted, for our firm adhering to the pure Worship of God.

Nor thro' *Pride* and *Conceit*, This carries some off from publick Assemblies. *viz.* A pretence that they know as much already, as others can tell them, and it's but a loss of time to be still hearing the same things over again: They can improve it to as much advantage by reading their Bible, or some good Books at home. But this is the high Road to Apostacy, and its no wonder if such a Principle issue in an utter renunciation of all Religion. The Psalmist long'd for God's Sanctuary, tho, it was to see the Power and Glory of God, as he *had seen it*. We must not expect a new Gospel, another Revelation; but we may hope in publick Ordinances to have the *Same* made more clear and intelligible, more powerful and effectual; for God loves the Gates of *Zion*, more than all the dwellings of *Jacob*; and

Plal. 63. 2.

and has promis'd wherever Christians are gather'd together in the Redeemers Name, he will in a peculiar manner be present with them to bless them.

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¶ Nor thro' *Covetousness and for worldly Advantage*. It was from hence that *Demas* forsook *Paul* and went to *Thessalonica*, that being the likeliest Place to serve the turn of a Man who loved the present World; for there was an Idols Temple, where some think he became a *Priest*, or this was a noble Empory, where others think he became a *Merchant*. Be that how it will, the love of this World was that which caused him to forsake his Religion. But let us be faithful to our Engagements, and never forsake the House of our God; either for *fear of loss*, or from the *hopes and Prospect of Gain*: Thro' Cowardise to avoid Trouble, or Covetousness to attend our Farm and Merchandize. If we are of the Psalmists Mind, *a Day in Gods Courts will be better to us than a thousand elsewhere*, and we shall chuse to be *Door-keepers in his House*, rather than to dwell in the *Tents of Wickedness*, and there in be rais'd to the highest Preferments.

Nor thro' *Prejudice and Discontent*, Personal Quarrels and party Strifes have driven some from the House of their God. Suppos'd, or (if real) yet slight Offences have given them a disgust, and caus'd 'em in a pet to forsake their Place and Duty. But my Brethren, this ought not to be. Because one has offended me, shall I therefore Sin against God? If another has not done his Duty, must I therefore neglect mine?

Nor thro' *Prophaneness and Irreligion*; so too many have done. Their former Zeal for God's House, is now become the matter of their own Jest;

jest; they laugh at all their past Devotion; and wonder they should be so silly as to run after Sermons, &c. and being (as they imagine) grown wiser, they have left their Seat in the Temple, to place themselves in that of the Scorners.

Such is the Prophaneness of many, that they are grown to an utter Contempt of Gospel Ordinances, and the Day set apart for the Administration of them. The Commands and Promises of God are of equal weight with 'em, *i. e.* none at all: for notwithstanding all he has said to enforce the strict observation of his Holy-day; the Mornings of it are lost with many in their Beds, and the Afternoon in Company and Entertainment. Others spend it in the Fields, and make that the Day for their walking abroad or journeying, and visiting; and their Hearts are so estranged from the publick Worship, that they prefer their Lusts, their Pleasures and sinful Recreations, to all the Privileges and Advantages of God's House. But all this will be bitterness in the End; and therefore, Oh my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, mine Honour, be not thou united to their Assembly.

*Nor for want of a present sensible Advantage.* Their not profiting by a long Attendance on publick Ordinances, has tempted some to think at least, of quitting their place in God's House; from an imagination that there's less Guilt contracted by a total Absence from holy Ordinances, than such an unprofitable Attendance on them. But this persuasion comes not of him that calls you; the Hand of Satan is in all this, whom you ought stedfastly to resist.

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Lastly, *Not thro' the Apostacy and Defection of others*; a thing that too often happens. Some Persons Goodness, is like a morning Cloud and an early Dew that soon passes away. We have sad Instances of those that once shew'd a great Zeal for Religion, and were very forward Promoters of such Lectures and Societies, but afterwards broke thro' all the Restraints of their former Engagements into the utmost height of Wickedness and Impiety; and have, at last, grown worse than many others that never went their length. And is this to be wonder'd at! Does it surprise us? Should it offend us? Did not many of our Lord's Disciples go back, and walk no more with him? They that run after him wherever he went; follow'd him from place to place with abundance of Zeal; now turn their Backs upon him, and will no longer attend upon his Ministry; and did this Defection of others make the Disciples think the worse of him or his Service? Judge by their answer to that Question, *Will ye also go away? Lord, Whither should we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life.* They reject the Thought with the utmost Indignation, and are the more determin'd for Christ themselves, when they see others sit so loose to him. Thus should we resolve to stand by our Engagements to God and one another, whatever others do, tho' they have or should forsake the House of God, yet will not we. Their Example shall never influence us so far as to discourage us, much less turn us aside from the way of our Duty, but rather excite us to a greater Stedfastness in the Faith, and Zeal in frequenting the House of God. Whatever others do, let us resolve we will serve the Lord.

And

*a Holy Resolution not to forsake it.*

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And to assist you herein I shall leave with you the following Directions.

Dir I. *Act in all you do, from a principle of Love to God and his Worship.* The Love of God's House should be at the bottom of all our Endeavours for its Prosperity. It's this facilitates Duty; makes *that* Hearty, and *us* Constant in its Performance. It's this that commends all our Services to God. The laying down our *Lives* in Martyrdom to confirm the Truth; and the giving our *Estates* in Charity to feed the Poor, would all be nothing without it. And as this makes the Duty it self hearty, so will it make us constant in it. The more Love, ever the more Activity. All the strength of the Mind and powers of Nature wait upon Love; they contrive and cast about for the Good of the Object beloved.

If there be a sincere Affection to the House of God, we shall think no Pains or Cost too much to bestow upon it. Lord, saith David, *I have loved the Habitation of thy House, and the place where thine Honour dwells.* Therefore I was glad when they said unto me, *let us go into the House of the Lord.* I love to be in that dear place, and am pleas'd when others call upon me to repair to it. Psal. 26. 8.

And because of his love to it, this, says he, is the *one thing I have desired of the Lord, which also I will seek after, that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of my Life, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and enquire in his holy Temple.* Psal. 27. 4.

And again, because *I have set my Affection to the House of my God,* therefore have I given of my own proper Goods, such large Summs towards the building of it. He did not perform 1 Chron. 29. 3.

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this Service as Papists afterwards built Churches, or Pharisees gave Alms; the former to make Atonement for their Sins, and as a commutation for Pennance; the latter for vain Applause, to be seen and admir'd of Men; No, but because he had set his Affection to it. From all which it appears, how necessary this Principle is to make us steady in our Resolutions, not to forsake the House of our God. If there be a sincere affection to this House, if we love the Worship, Service and Ordinances of Christ; if we love Sabbaths; if we love Prayer and the Word; if we take a Pleasure in the Communion of Saints, and a delight in the Ordinances of Divine Worship, we shall never grow weary of God's Service, so as to forsake his House. And the want of this Principle is one great Cause of all our Declensions and Backslidings from God.

This being secur'd we shou'd then,

Dir. II. *Watch against any secret dislike of God's Worship and Ordinances* arising in our Hearts. Total Apostacies usually take their rise from hence: An Indifferency and Coldness towards our spiritual Priviledges, grows by degrees to a downright contempt and neglect of them: Therefore stop this in its beginning; meet with such a Distemper when it first seizes you, suspect every thing that so much as tends to a forsaking the House of your God.

Dir. III. *Be concern'd to find a real Advantage to your own Souls, by your attendance on divine Institutions.* The want of this is another thing that lies at the bottom of all our Declensions and Apostacies: When we rest in a form of Godliness, and satisfy our selves with meer *External Performances*,  
being

being at the same time strangers to the Life and Power of Religion: The Exercises thereof will become burthensome; and as such are like to be discarded at last. Without this, the most solemn Engagements are no more able to hold us, than the *Philistines* Cords were to bind *Sampson*. We shall in time grow weary of the Service, reckon it a Task and a Burthen, which we shall be still seeking an opportunity to get rid of, especially in an Hour of Temptation: Whereas if in this House, and in these Attendances, we tast and see that God is gracious; *If we behold his Glory, and feel his Power*; If we have an Experimental Knowledge of Communion with him therein, we shall be secur'd against all Temptations to forsake his House.

Dir. IV. See to it, that your Hearts be not absent from God's House, when your Bodies are present there. The great thing that God looks at, is the Heart; and if this be remov'd from him, we forsake the very places which we daily frequent. *Israel* of old worshipp'd God, they did not neglect his Ordinances; but went at stated times into the Temple to pray. *This People*, Mat. 15. says God, *draw nigh to me with their Mouths, and honour me with their Lips*, but then the complaint is, *their Hearts are remov'd far from me*. We may run thro' many Years of Profession, of Prayers and Sermons, Sacraments and Sabbaths; and in the worst sense, all this while be said to forsake the House of our God: For in his account (who sees not as Man sees) we are, where our Hearts are: God may be near in our Mouths, but far from our Reins. It concerns us therefore to take a particular Care, that our Minds be not absent, and our Hearts at a distance from God, when to appearance we are drawing nigh

to him; for otherwise we really forsake the Assemblies, we would be thought to attend.

Dir. V. *Exercise your selves in a due consideration of Christ the Apostle and high Priest of our Profession.* This is the Apostles own direction, when he is exhorting the believing *Hebrews* to a Constancy and Perseverance in the Profession of their Faith, *Wherefore holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly Calling, consider the Apostle and high Priest of our Profession, Christ Jesus:* Be much in the contemplation of the Person, Office and Work of Christ; consider what he is in himself, and what he is to you; think of him as your Apostle and high Priest, as your Pattern and Example, as your Head and Judge: Remember him that did and suffer'd so much because of his Zeal for God's House. Consider the Day of his Coming is at Hand, when he will graciously reward those that faithfully serv'd him; and as severely punish them that despis'd his Person, and neglected his Worship. This will keep you from fainting and growing weary in your Minds, and give you an assured Victory in the End.

It's the observation of one upon this Place, whose thoughts in these things I own go a great way with me, 'That the want of this Consideration of the Apostle and high Priest of our Profession, is the great Reason so many fall off from the Truths and Ways of the Gospel. By the neglect of this, they lose the great means of their Preservation. It's no wonder, that the Ways and Ordinances of Christ are neglected, when He himself is so; since they have no Beauty nor Excellency in them, but what arises from their Relation to his Person and Offices; and when these are not understood, they must needs become

become burthensome and unpleasant. If we search into the Root of Soul-Distempers, and enquire whence it is, that we find a secret dislike of the Ways and Ordinances of Christ; at least not that delight in 'em as formerly, we shall find our Hearts and Spirits have not been exercis'd with that consideration of the Person and Office of Christ, they ought to have been. And therefore I do recommend to you this Direction of the Apostle, as the most effectual means to keep us stedfast in the Profession of our Faith.

Lastly, Resolve and attempt all in Religion, with a dependance upon the Spirit's aid for your Assistance; the Blessing of God for your Success, and the Blood of Christ for your Acceptance.

Our Resolutions for God must be serious and advis'd, thorough and absolute: But then with a deep sense of our own insufficiency, disclaiming all Confidence in our own Strength, and depending entirely on the Aid and Assistance of the blessed Spirit; for if he forsake us, the most solemn Engagements will certainly come to nothing.

The Blessing of God is that also which we must depend upon for our Success, in all we do of this Nature; *For except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain that build it.* You have in this Exercise *One* to Plant, and *Another* to Water, but tho' these were a *Paul* or an *Apollos*, it's all they could do, this is the furthest they can go, its God must give the increase; and his Blessing alone that perfects the Work. To conclude,

Let all be done with a dependance upon the Redeemer's Righteousness for our Acceptance.

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We shall see cause to acknowledge even when we have done our best, *that we are but unprofitable Servants*, and need a better Obedience than our own to recommend us to the Acceptance of God. Our deceitful Hearts will break thro' the strongest Engagements; and our impure mixtures, pollute the holiest Duties: Its therefore the Spirit's Help that must make us *faithful*, and the Son's Mediation alone that can render us *accepted*. Without his Spirit we can do nothing, and even that which is perform'd in his Strength, must be perfum'd with his Incense, or it will never come up before God with Acceptance.



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